

King of compassion

Notes on the Gospel reading

- Jesus tells a story of how the Son of Man will separate his people into two groups: one group is welcomed into his kingdom, the other turned away. And the deciding factor – what puts us in one group rather than the other – is how we treat other people. Those welcomed into the kingdom of heaven are those who cared for the hungry, the poor, the sick and the stranger. Those who didn't do these things are not welcomed in.

- Jesus also makes it very clear that when you care for the 'least' – people who aren't seen as important – you are taking care of him. Interestingly, neither group of people realised at that time that they were taking care of Jesus (or not). This suggests that Jesus is less interested in people who are good at following rules but in those who instead naturally love people because they know they are loved by God.

- For us today, these verses remind us that it is important we learn to see everyone as God sees them – as being valuable and worthy of care.

An active Advent calendar

Draw (or use a computer to create, and then print) a 6x4 grid onto an A4 sheet of paper. In a household, have one grid each. Working together or on your own, but with reference to today's Gospel reading, think of 24 things that you might do to express compassion to other people. Write one idea in each space on the grid. Work your way through the sheet during December – ideally one action each day.

FREE [worship at home](#) resources, including up-to-the-minute reflection on this week's Bible reading, available at: www.rootsontheweb.com

Questions for reflection

- ▶ During the worst of this year's Covid-19 pandemic, who did you want to show appreciation to?
- ▶ When have you instinctively responded to a human need?
- ▶ How might you/your church/our society become more compassionate?



A prayer of approach

We come to you, Lord, people who are hungry or thirsty, strangers, imprisoned, exposed, knowing that you have come to us, too, in these same guises. In our brokenness, welcome us. And open up our defences as we come to you. Amen.

A prayer for others

*For the times when we are sick:
may we have healing.*

*For the times when we are isolated:
may we have company.*

*For the times when we are oppressed:
may we have justice.*

*For the times when we are exposed:
may we have dignity.*

*For the times when we are mistreated:
may we have humanity.*

*For the times when we are ignored:
may we be heard.*

*For the times when we ignore, or isolate, or oppress,
or expose or mistreat:
may we change. Amen.*

A personal prayer

Sometimes I am tired, or I'm preoccupied with other demands. Help me take time, help me make time, for kindness, so that rush can take its lower place, and kindness can rise up. Because you had much to do – but made time anyway. Amen.

Live your faith

Carry a piece of cotton wool with you as a reminder to be like the sheep in Jesus' story – a blessing to others through their attitudes and actions (and not like the goats, hard-hearted or dismissive of other people).